

Hurricanes in Hawaii

Hurricanes and tropical storms combine the triple threat of violent winds, torrential rains, and storm surge. Each of these by itself could pose a serious threat to life and property. With a combined threat, even a Category 1 storm is capable of causing widespread destruction, especially to homes that are older or located in coastal areas or flood zones.

High Winds

Can destroy homes and structures, especially those that have not been built or retrofitted to withstand hurricane force winds.



Storm Surge*

Can cause extensive flood damage to structures near shorelines, even those that are not usually prone to flooding.

Heavy Rain

Can produce unusually heavy or prolonged rainfall that can cause extensive flooding.



**Storm surge is the leading cause of hurricane-related fatalities.*

Watch

A Hurricane or Tropical Storm Watch is issued when a hurricane or tropical storm is expected within 48 hours. Use this time to prepare and review your family emergency plan and kit.

Weather Alerts*

Warning

A Hurricane or Tropical Storm Warning is issued when a hurricane or tropical storm is expected within 36 hours. Use this time to take protective actions to either evacuate or shelter-in-place.

**In addition to hurricane and tropical storm alerts, officials may issue hurricane-related weather alerts (such as flood or high wind alerts).*

Shelter-in-Place vs. Evacuation

Can I stay home through the storm?

No, definitely evacuate if:

- You live in an older single wall wood framed home built before 1995 that has not been retrofitted to withstand hurricane-force winds.

Possibly, have a plan ready and be prepared to evacuate if:

- Authorities advise evacuation in your area.
- Destructive storm surge is forecast for your area.
- You live on an exposed ridgeline.
- You live in a flood zone or an area at risk of flooding, particularly in a dam evacuation zone or near a stream.

Probably, plan to shelter-in-place if your home meets all these conditions:

- Built after 1994 or retrofitted to withstand hurricane-force winds.
- Has protected windows (i.e. fitted with plywood, shutters, reinforced glass, etc.) and/or access to an interior room with no windows, no exterior walls, and enough space for all family members, pets, and emergency supplies.
- Located outside of a storm surge hazard area.
- If located in a storm surge hazard area, you live in a condo or apartment on the 4th floor or higher in a building 10 stories or taller. Or, if your unit is below the 4th floor, you are able to temporarily shelter-in-place in on a higher floor in an interior hallway, stairwell, or in another unit.

Evacuation Best Option

Consider evacuating to the pre-identified home of a friend or family member that meet the shelter-in-place principles above. If possible, determine if your workplace has a protected area where employees and families are allowed to take refuge. Make sure to take your disaster supplies with you.

Evacuation Last Resort Option

If you do not have any other options, evacuate to the nearest Hurricane Refuge Area. While these offer some protection from hurricane threats, they are intended to be a last resort for those without safer options to use. In almost all cases, these facilities – that are often referred to as “shelters” – do not meet State of Hawaii guidelines for hurricane evacuation shelters. Registered design professionals have determined that Oahu shelters are “best available refuge areas,” which provide a safer option than remaining in areas prone to flooding, storm surge, or in older homes with wood frames or single-wall construction. When evacuating, take your disaster supplies with you, as Hurricane Refuge Areas provide no supplies.



Things to Do Today

Not sure where to start or what to ask? Visit our hurricane resource hub (link below) for more info.



Know your specific hazards. Do you live in a flood zone or on a ridge line? These and other factors increase your risk during a hurricane.



Check your insurance policies to determine what, if any, hurricane-related damage is covered by your policy. Standard homeowner and renters' insurance do not include hurricane or flood coverage.



Build your 14-day disaster supply kit, which should include enough supplies to last a minimum of 14 days per person in your household.



Get appropriate supplies to board up windows. These materials can include shutters, mesh screens, plywood, panels, and impact-resistant glass. They need to be sized for your windows well in advance of a storm.

When the Storm Is Coming



- ✓ Clear rain gutters and downspouts. Be sure trees and shrubs around your home are well trimmed.
- ✓ Secure loose objects like trimmings, outdoor furniture, surfboards, and trash cans to prevent them from becoming projectiles in high wind.
- ✓ Board up windows. Tape does not prevent windows from breaking. Secure and brace exterior doors.
- ✓ Turn off utilities if instructed to do so. Turn the refrigerator thermostat to its coldest setting and keep its doors closed.
- ✓ Monitor local radio and TV stations for emergency information and important updates.
- ✓ Prepare to evacuate based on your individual plan. If your plan is to go to a public shelter, stay tuned to local media for a list of open hurricane refuge areas. Take your supply kit with you wherever you evacuate.

When the Storm Hits

- ✓ Stay indoors away from windows, skylights & glass doors.
- ✓ Close interior doors and take refuge in a small interior room, like a closet or hallway, on the lowest level of your home.
- ✓ The eye of the hurricane is deceptively calm and almost free of clouds with light winds and warm temperatures. Do not go outdoors while the eye is passing; the full intensity of the storm will reoccur in minutes.
- ✓ Monitor local radio stations for emergency information and important updates.

After the Storm Passes

- ✓ Continuously monitor TV (if working) and radio for instructions. Authorities will announce when it is safe to go outside and/or to return to your home.
- ✓ Be aware of hazards, i.e. down power lines, broken gas lines, contaminated water, weakened structures, broken glass, etc. Debris on roadways will limit your ability to drive around.
- ✓ When assessing damage, take photos to document your losses.
- ✓ Once it is safe to return and you have photographed damage, begin cleaning immediately to avoid further hazards like mold growth.

To learn more about hurricane preparedness visit:

honolulu.gov/dem

